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July 22, 2011

David Harmon
Student Achievement and School Accountability Programs
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave.
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Mr. Harmon:

The South Dakota Department of Education seeks to amend its State graduation target rate for AYP accountability purposes.

For the 2010-11 school year, South Dakota has moved to the Title I Four-Year Adjusted Cohort model for calculation of the graduation rate. South Dakota is dedicated to graduating students who are ready for postsecondary and workforce success. We know that for many students, especially those with the greatest challenges, the traditional four-year program does not provide adequate time for college and career readiness. South Dakota does not want the movement to a four-year cohort model to create a disincentive for keeping students in school beyond four years in order that all students may reach a graduation goal.

Specifically, for accountability purposes, we are requesting the following change:

Other Academic Indicators

Adequate Yearly Progress for the Other Academic Indicators is determined for each school and district grade span for its student group of all students.

For accountability purposes, a school or district grade span that includes grade 12 will be expected to meet or exceed the State's graduation rate target of 80% or show progress of at least two percentage points. The State's graduation rate goal is 85%. A school or district grade span that does not enroll students in grade 12 must have an average daily attendance rate that will meet or exceed the state's minimum attendance rate expectation of 94% or show progress.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have questions or concerns regarding our workbook, please contact Janet Ricketts, director of our Office of Educational Services and Support, at (605) 773-4689 or janet.ricketts@state.sd.us

Sincerely,

Dr. Melody Schopp
Secretary